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THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLICITY IN EDUCATIONAL AND CHARITABLE WORK.

BY WILLIAM H. ALLEN, GENERAL AGENT OF THE NEW YORK
ASSOCIATION FOR IMPROVING THE CONDITION OF THE POOR.

DURING the second week in July will be held the annual sessions of the National Education Association and the National Conference of Charities and Correction. Newspaper head-lines will probably announce that ten thousand pedagogues are meeting on the Atlantic seaboard at Asbury Park, and five hundred philanthropists at Portland on the Pacific. Press agents will telegraph broadcast each innovation suggested, each reactionary criticism, each striking phrase or fact; educational and fireside journals will summarize the serious thought; while syndicated witticisms and moral effusions will be liberally quoted in the patent inside that supplements the personal notes and village advertising of the rural weekly. In these ways the national convention is disseminating standards of thought and of effort that enable the smallest hamlet to benefit from universal experience. Moreover, the individual delegate returns to his little corner, inspired and encouraged by the consciousness that in him speak not merely his own ideals, but the ideals of thousands of his colleagues. He moves not of his own momentum only, but is impelled by that of all educators, all charitable workers. He expects the collective layman to "incorporate" or "promote" the new inspiration and stamp with approval the new standard. Probation saves jail expenses and redeems citizens in New Jersey; it should be tried in Georgia. Volunteer boards have successfully managed State institutions in the East; they should be adopted by the West. Manual training is admitted by all to develop moral and economic qualities; therefore introduce manual training in the schools of Des Moines.

So obviously does the extension of the improved standard depend upon the layman that it is usually regarded as unnecessary to discuss either him or his rights. We find, accordingly, a marked tendency to assume that the problem before an educational or philanthropic Convention primarily concerns two parties only, the beneficiary, on the one hand, and the teacher or charity worker, on the other. The layman is forgotten, and little or no attention is given to the technical means of obtaining and holding his intelligent interest in schools and charities, or to the obligation of informing him as to the returns obtained from his outlay of interest and means.

The need for a systematic method of raising funds receives even less attention from these conferences. Most of us are still reluctant to admit that altruistic motives have laws which can be analyzed, understood and cultivated, as well as those of pedagogics and criminology. For want of proper analysis, we have been assuming that the springs of benevolence work according to caprice, not law; that, consequently, the secret of successful appealing should never be imparted to possible competitors. Whatever, therefore, may be the valuable experience that we travel across the continent to exchange—so far as it relates to the motherless infant, the crippled or idiotic child, the consumptive adult or criminal—we withhold our confidences from that point where our experience begins to relate to the men and women whose beneficence makes possible our philanthropic work. As for educators, they have still greater temptation than social workers to overlook the motives that determine the scope of their opportunity and measure the result of their endeavor. Legally recognized as part of the instrumentality essential to the maintenance of the minimum standard of living in an American community, they are prone to consider that they are entitled to the unqualified moral and financial support of every citizen. Not unnaturally, the lay proprietor, working as he does under legal and moral compulsion, comes to be regarded by the educator as an impersonal source of revenue.

This twofold neglect of the vast majority, who are neither beneficiaries nor agents of benefaction, is due in large measure to the fact that standards of thought and of effort have been much better worked out than standards of achievement. The public can easily learn how and when cooking should be taught,

how drunkards should be cared for and wayward girls reformed. But it is almost impossible to ascertain whether our teachers and social workers are obtaining results proportionate to outlay; whether our schools give the sought-for power; whether reformatories reform and hospitals cure; whether relief agencies relieve or pauperize. Yet these are questions which the general public is constantly asking, the answers being not seldom to the discredit of educational and philanthropic activities.

How little the layman participates in momentous decisions regarding educational policies may be illustrated by recent events in the public schools of Greater New York. With the gravest, most difficult, problem to solve and the greatest opportunity of any single city in the world, New York spends for its schools nearly \$25,000,000 annually, each resident paying tribute in one form or another. The safety of property, cleanliness of streets, watchfulness of police, the quality of milk or of press editorial purchasable, the stenographer's intelligence, the health rate, tax rate, interest rate—the composite standard of living—all are influenced for better or for worse by the character of instruction and discipline in the public schools. In view of this relation between layman and school, a wide-awake, intelligent lay interest in school problems and policies seems not only desirable but indispensable. There is every reason why the financial backer and silent partner, who has delegated his responsibility to teachers and directors, should be encouraged to know the essential facts regarding school expenses and educational returns. In fairness to him, his demand for retrenchment or open charges of gross extravagance, whatever their source, require one of two courses—either proof that retrenchment is nowhere possible without serious damage to the enterprise, or else retrenchment at the point where least damage will result. Yet when, in 1903, the Board of Estimate and Apportionment reduced by about \$800,000 the total appropriation requested for schools, the educational authorities were startled and injured. The financial representatives of the public were rebuked, the public itself was ignored. No proof was advanced that retrenchment was impossible without serious damage to the enterprise. The retrenchment finally proposed was not chosen because least harmful. On the contrary, it was avowedly effected at those points where untold injury must result, namely, Vacation Schools, Recreation Centres, Popular Lectures

and Evening Schools. The public was told by its fiscal authorities that "easy come, easy go" had been the rule in school finance; that there were flagrant extravagances that could be corrected; and that curriculum and equipment disbursements were not being controlled by proper standards of efficiency and economy. These charges were regarded by the public's chief educator, who happens now to be President of the National Education Association, as personal slurs upon himself, as covert attacks upon the foundation of American civilization, and as a menace to the principle of universal schooling. The wrath of the public, rather than its intelligence, was invoked; instead of facts, it was given an ultimatum, *plus* renewed assurance of motives concerned alone with the public good.

An independent inquiry on the part of the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor revealed the fact that the members of the Board of Education did about the best they could under the circumstances. If they had failed to enlighten the public as to the points at issue, they could plead in defence that they simply did not have the information to impart. There was no business standard of efficiency either for teaching or for disbursing agent, although an attempt was being made to "standardize" the Department of Supplies. Comparative statements and proper classification, even of gross items, were lacking. Although Recreation Centres were closing for lack of funds, the Superintendent proposed to furnish meals to breakfastless children, basing his estimate of the number of such children not upon school facts, but upon an outsider's guess. "Discoveries" were announced from time to time—now a discrepancy of thousands in the number of sittings available in the schools, or overestimate of hundreds in the number of teachers needed; again, that from twenty-eight to fifty per cent. of school-children were from two to six years out of place, lagging behind to block the lower grades and aggravating the part-time evil. The latest available report showed that the *per capita* disbursements for supplies differed in schools of the same size and type by twenty or fifty or over one hundred per cent. The number of teachers was increased in schools that showed a decrease in the number of pupils. A school of thirty-five rooms burned twice as much coal as a sixty-nine room school, having one thousand more pupils. Trustworthy, classified data could nowhere be obtained, either by a

member of the Board of Education, a legislator, an editor or a lay student desirous of promoting school interests. When asked how much special subjects cost per pupil, as compared with the three R's, the Department's auditor found it necessary to set at work a large office staff to compile information that the system of a business house would furnish automatically by months if not by weeks. For nearly two years, the financial backer and silent partner has read weekly, almost daily, charges of extravagance and "faddism." These charges alternate with claims or admissions on the part of the school authorities that the curriculum is being simplified, or perhaps that economies aggregating here \$10,000, there \$300,000, had been effected or were contemplated. Yet, there is no provision for placing before the public the facts upon which to base independent judgment and loyal support.

The New York school situation differs from that of the average small city only in this respect, that the former is expressed in terms of thousands and millions, whereas the small city speaks of pupils by hundreds and of dollars by thousands. Moreover, the weaknesses enumerated above are not confined to schools, but are typical of philanthropical effort and civil government throughout the country, bearing eloquent testimony to the proposition that an uninformed honest executive may be even more obstructive and ineffective than a vicious man subject to intelligent criticism. Information must precede reformation. To prevent "graft" and maladministration, light must be available, not once a year or once a month, but constantly; it should be furnished not by catastrophes, embezzlements or deficits, but by reports daily, weekly, monthly, annual. The mere occasional uncovering of gruesome sores, such as have been recently revealed in the body politic in Rhode Island, Connecticut and Missouri, brings forth little unless it leads to a mechanism that exposes automatically both dishonesty and incompetence. Whatever other remedies are needed, it is quite certain that politics must adopt, as has business enterprise, methods of control that make inefficiency too dangerous of practice because too easy of detection. Such control will be infinitely easier to effect after philanthropy and education have abandoned their present haphazard methods, which are incompatible with the business standards of our time, suggesting rather the days when nature's prodigality of oil or gold caused man to scorn accounts and economies.

The New York Board of Education seems about to set an example to the world of educators. It has a committee of five, of which its president is a member, to consider the remedies proposed, namely: (1) Establish standards of achievement for both the educational and business side of school administration; (2) publish reports with such promptness and of such a character that they will educate the layman in his duties as proprietor and beneficiary of the school system. The Committee is headed by an expert accountant, who, as Chairman of the Department of Supplies, has labored for two years to establish units of measurement and methods of control, such as railroads and manufactures find indispensable. Associated with him are three lawyers, and a banker and a broker, all disciplined in the methods of large enterprise, and all determined to give the schools the same quality of service that would be given to any other large corporation. The specialist whom they have asked to survey the system from beginning to end is an authority on collecting, classifying and presenting business experience,—the same whose report formed the basis of the remedies mentioned above, and whose services have since been enlisted by the Mayor's Finance Commission, as Chairman of its sub-committee on accounting.

The movement thus begun in New York differs from others, attempted in various American cities from time to time, in that its avowed purpose is to increase service rendered, rather than to lower tax rates or purify politics. New York wants more money for schools and better schools, more money for parks, for tenement and sanitary inspection; its Board of Education and its Mayor wish to see whether administrative facts, promptly and intelligibly presented, will not result in abolishing the present method of appropriating public funds according to some sliding scale of guesses, rather than needs measured and results obtained. It is worth while for the National Convention of Educators at Asbury Park to study this proposed method of strengthening the schools' hold upon lay interest and public purse. It behooves them, furthermore, one and all, to examine the methods now employed in securing and disbursing appropriations for their own schools, in order to see to what extent these methods are strengthening the forces of corruption which thrive only where laymen are not properly informed.

The proposition is simple. Certainly no one can fail to see

the vast significance of facts giving timely notice alike to teacher and to public regarding such matters as these: the proportion of backward school-children needing special instruction; the cost of teaching German or manual training as compared with that of teaching English; the percentage of children who fail of promotion; the percentage that take the entire grammar-school course; the fair cost and actual cost per pupil for supplies and for teaching; the fair cost and actual cost for coal per cubic foot of space heated; the proportion of public funds and school time that may be properly devoted to courses which only the small minority can hope to take; the proportion of pupils benefiting from so-called special features, that, in the absence of definite results obtained, are rightly termed "fads"; whether pupils learn to take business dictation in courses of stenography; what percentage of graduates should know how to spell ordinary words and write a legible hand; the equipment provided for instruction, and just where that equipment is inadequate. A proper method of collecting, classifying and recording facts such as these, comparing department with department, school with school, month with month, year with year, will continually and instantly disclose the weakest spots in the system we wish to make strong, the least profitable of the expenditures we aim to render remunerative, and the first signs of the waste and duplication each educator is pledged to prevent.

The field of charities and correction suffers from the same want of business method in measuring result obtained with effort and money expended. In the past we have made a fetich of volunteer management, resting secure in the knowledge that those to whom hospitals, relief bureaus and rescue missions were intrusted had no selfish motives to gratify. "*Possunt, quia posse videntur*" explained the outcome of the Trojan boat-race; but to-day, apart from social, educational and religious work, the point of view thus expressed is abandoned for the business motto, "*They were able, because they were prepared.*" Yet the man of affairs continues to go from an office where business facts are classified, where the experience of his profession is constantly available for the day's work, to his post as director of hospital or charitable society, where experience has never been classified and where methods of intelligent control are lacking.

In my hand I hold the latest published reports of three hos-

pitals, whose annual operating expenses aggregate \$400,000. Two of these give complete medical statistics, telling all about Fasciotomies, Epididymites, Carcinoma ventriculi, etc.; the third, all about the nationalities and trades of patients, and much about provisions. But not one tells how much it costs to support a patient one day or a week; what endowment is required to pay the entire expense of supporting a bed in perpetuity; what proportion of the cost of maintaining free beds is borne by public subsidy; what percentage of expense is for salaries or provisions; the price paid per ton for coal, or per pound for beef; what fraction of the total day's treatment given is wholly free; how much certain or pledged income the hospital has. Not one summarizes the facts published, so as to show by comparative tables and percentages the direction in which it is going, with respect to classes of patient or of expense. Yet these reports are vastly superior to the average hospital report, and the hospitals for which they plead are among the foremost of their kind in the world. Each reports current expenses to be in excess of current income by many thousand dollars. Each consumes endowment and legacy, whereas it is supposed to use only the interest on these funds. In this respect, too, as well as in their reporting, they are typical of private hospitals throughout the world. London's hospitals are in desperate straits, the King's personal interest being required to rally the public to their support, and the hospital authorities to the systematic study of resources and the practice of economies. In New York, practically all of the large hospitals, depending in any measure on private subscription, announce large deficits, many wards being closed for lack of funds. Yet there is no good work which is believed in so generally as that of the hospital. This paradox of universal interest and universal deficit is due undoubtedly to the fact that business standards have not hitherto been applied either to the raising or spending of hospital funds. In other words, the silent partner and financial backer has not been sufficiently considered, either by hospital executives or by the volunteer boards which in theory represent lay interest.

Similar significant illustrations might be drawn from different types of charitable organization. A classical example is furnished by the Lyman School for Boys, of which the whole country has been proud for more than a generation. Year after year its di-

rectors, all praiseworthy altruists of the "Massachusetts type," have exploited in general terms the wonderful character-building influence of this school upon its boy charges. A chart was prepared for the Chicago Exposition to teach the inquiring student of reformatory methods what a great work the Lyman School had done. But, to the chagrin of all, the chart when completed showed that a distressingly large percentage of the boys were still in durance vile at various penal institutions, while a painfully small percentage could be referred to with pride. The directors believed their chart and obeyed it. It is now known, not merely for exposition purposes, but for every-day uses, exactly where the boys are and what they need, after as well as before they leave the institution.

In thousands of philanthropic and relief societies and in hundreds of public institutions managed by volunteers, a graphic comparison of results obtained with time and means expended would reveal waste, extravagance, perverted use of talents and means, and neglect of opportunity offered, such as would cause the cry of scandal if discovered in institutions managed by political or civil-service appointees. But, Polonius-like, we permit the same cloud to change from camel to weasel and to disappear, according to the person offending against the laws of economy and efficiency. Failure to achieve proper results, however, punishes the public, irrespective of the relative proportion of honesty and capacity possessed by its representatives. Disregard of standards that secure proper proportions between outlay and return means social waste in charitable, religious and educational work, as well as in commerce and politics.

A political humorist maintains that "we'll never abolish hanging so long as people likes it so much." It is also safe to say that we shall have inefficiency and dishonesty in public life so long as philanthropist and educator cling, in their particular fields, to those methods of withholding facts and ignoring the public that, in other fields, mislead and confuse honest intention, while protecting vicious purpose and conduct.

WILLIAM H. ALLEN.